



# NEWS



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## **LAW ENFORCEMENT FOCUSES ON ELIMINATING DISTRACTED DRIVING**

*CHP joins forces with traffic safety partners in a monthlong, life-saving effort*

SACRAMENTO, Calif. – Driver distraction is a significant and growing problem in California. Inattention while behind the wheel proved to be especially deadly in 2009 as 116 people lost their lives as the result of a collision in which at least one driver was distracted. More than 17,000 others were injured under similar circumstances.

To address this growing concern, the California Highway Patrol (CHP) and more than 200 law enforcement agencies throughout the state are conducting a series of enforcement efforts during April - National Distracted Driving Awareness Month. The crackdown begins today with the first, two-day statewide enforcement effort.

"When you're behind the wheel of a vehicle, any distraction can be serious, even life-threatening. Texting, especially, while driving is not only illegal, it is just not a good idea," said CHP Commissioner Joe Farrow. "Most of these crashes can be prevented if the drivers change their behavior and focus on driving."

Not only do drivers put themselves at risk while multi-tasking, drivers increase the risk of injuring or killing their passengers, bicyclists, pedestrians or innocent victims traveling in another vehicle. It is the responsibility of all drivers to keep the roads safe.

To help address the deadly problem, the CHP received a grant from the California Office of Traffic Safety (OTS) through the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. In addition, local police and sheriffs' departments will be adding several 'zero tolerance' enforcement days throughout the month.

"OTS is proud to both help provide the CHP with the additional resources they need to combat this problem and to sign up over 275 local law enforcement agencies to join in this kickoff campaign," said OTS Director Christopher J. Murphy. "This is a problem that threatens to grow even larger and faster if California's drivers are not convinced that mobile device use is dangerous."

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While the number one source of driver inattention is the use of cell phones, distracted driving is more than just using technology when driving. It represents a range of activities that impact a driver's visual, auditory, physical or cognitive abilities when driving.

Hoping to drive the message home and convince motorists to disconnect from this distracting, often deadly behavior while behind the wheel, the CHP will, in addition to the enforcement effort, launch a grant-funded public service campaign, conduct educational presentations and staff booths at community events at which educational materials can be distributed.

"Through the combined efforts of California's law enforcement agencies, our traffic safety partners like OTS, the California Department of Transportation (Caltrans) and the Department of Motor Vehicles our goal is to enlighten drivers statewide about the dangers of distracted driving," said Commissioner Farrow. "Too many lives are destroyed every year because of distracted driving; it's not worth it."

To view the distracted driving public service announcements, go to the CHP's website: [www.chp.ca.gov](http://www.chp.ca.gov) or [http://www.chp.ca.gov/depts\\_divs\\_offs/omr\\_texting.html](http://www.chp.ca.gov/depts_divs_offs/omr_texting.html)

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